

# Their Future ...



*The Iowa Department of Education, Bureau of Children,  
Family & Community Services in collaboration with  
Iowa Area Education Agencies and Iowa School Districts*

August 1999

## ... Our Guidance

**The IEP Process At A Glance**



# Their Future ... Our Guidance: The IEP Process At a Glance

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August 1999

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# Why do I have this booklet?

*Their Future ... Our Guidance: The IEP Process at a Glance* is written for parents and general education teachers. It may also be helpful for school board members and students in teacher preparation programs. *The IEP Process at a Glance* provides an overview of the process used to develop individualized education programs (IEPs) for students with disabilities. Parents and general education teachers participate in the process that determines the special education services for the child. The development of an IEP is a complex process guided by many requirements from laws, rules, and regulations. This booklet is an introduction to that process.

If you are interested in more information about the IEP process, you may refer to:

- *Their Future ... Our Guidance: Iowa IEP Guidebook*;
- *Parental Rights in Special Education*; and
- the Parent-Educator Connection program of your area education agency.

## A special thanks ...

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# Guiding Principles

The Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA) is legislation to ensure that children with disabilities receive an education that meets their unique needs. IDEA requires that an individualized education program (IEP) be written for each child who requires special education services. A team develops the IEP at a meeting. The team includes the student (when appropriate), parents, educators, and other invited persons.

The following six guiding principles are the basis for the State of Iowa's IEP model:

- The IEP is a process and a product that documents the student is receiving an education consistent with all federal and state requirements.
- The IEP reflects the student and family's vision for the student's future.
- To the maximum extent appropriate, students requiring special education services are educated with students who do not require special education.
- IEP development is a collaborative process.
- The IEP is based on the student's involvement and progress in the general curriculum and postschool goals.
- The IEP process involves ongoing progress monitoring and decision making.

# IEP Meetings

The purpose of an IEP meeting is to share information and to plan and prepare for the coming year. There is an IEP meeting at least once a year for every student. Any member of the IEP team may request an IEP meeting more often than once a year.

In preparation for the IEP process, the school or area education agency (AEA) and the parents agree to a time and place for the meeting. Parents receive a written notice of the meeting that includes the time, place, and purpose of the meeting, and the names and roles of people who are invited. Parents receive a copy of *Parental Rights in Special Education* with the meeting notice.

It may be helpful for parents to complete *Our Ideas for the IEP* before the meeting. This form is in the Parent Resources section of this booklet. Educators prepare for the meeting by reviewing school and classroom information about the student. Educators may write drafts of some parts of the IEP prior to the meeting.

## **IEP Team Members and Their Roles:**

Each person on the team is knowledgeable about the student and serves a critical function in the development of a meaningful, effective IEP.

### **Parents**

Parents are equal participants in the IEP meeting. The parents:

- provide critical information about their child's abilities, interests, performance, and history;
- participate in the discussion about their child's need for special education services;
- help decide how their child will be involved and progress in the general education curriculum;
- help decide how their child will participate in state and districtwide assessments; and
- help determine the services their child needs and the settings for those services.

### **Student**

The student participates in the IEP process whenever appropriate and must be invited when he or she is 14 or older. The student:

- communicates his or her needs, interests and preferences; and
- communicates his or her viewpoint about decisions and plans.

### **Special Educator(s)**

The special educator may be a teacher or another special education provider such as a speech-language pathologist, physical or occupational therapist. Special educators:

- participate in planning and decision making;
- provide information about the results of the most recent IEP; and
- provide information about special education services, including strategies and accommodations that may benefit the student.

### **General Education Teacher**

At least one general education teacher of the student participates in the IEP process. The general education teacher:

- participates in discussions about how best to teach the student;
- provides expertise regarding the general education curriculum and environment; and
- helps to determine appropriate assistance for the student and support for school personnel.

For children three to five years of age, the general education teacher might be a preschool teacher or a day care provider.



<b>Representative of the School District</b>	<p>The school's representative is a special educator or someone who can supervise special education. The school district representative:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• is knowledgeable about the general curriculum;</li> <li>• is knowledgeable about the resources available through the school and AEA; and</li> <li>• has the authority to commit resources and to ensure those responsible will provide the services described in the IEP.</li> </ul>
<b>Interpreter of Evaluation Results</b>	<p>One of the participants in the meeting must be able to explain the instructional implications of evaluation results.</p>
<b>Outside Agency Representatives</b>	<p>Representatives of other agencies must be invited to help with the coordination of transition services (provide input, commit resources, etc.).</p>
<b>Persons Invited by the Parents or School</b>	<p>The parent, school or AEA may invite other individuals who have knowledge or special expertise about the student. When arranging the meeting, make sure it is clear who will make the invitation.</p>

The IEP team must include at least one parent, a general education teacher, and a special educator. It is possible for the special educator to also be the school's representative and to be the person responsible for interpreting evaluation results.

The IEP team makes informed decisions for an individualized education program focused on the vision and the needs of the student. A successful IEP meeting may include:

- setting an agenda
- an introduction defining the purpose of the meeting
- personal introductions, with each participant indicating his or her role at the meeting
- ground rules
- sharing information from all participants
- participation of all team members, including the student
- sharing ideas so all team members can see (writing on flip charts, overheads, newsprint, or computer display)
- sharing information with parents and student so that it is easy to understand
- procedures that lead to decisions made by consensus  
Consensus is agreement based on the mutual feeling that the IEP team has addressed all concerns and that everyone has had the opportunity to be heard and feels understood.
- summary of the meeting and defining the next steps  
The IEP document is a record of information discussed at the meeting, decisions made by the team and actions planned for the student. Parents have time to consider any changes before the changes take effect.

Generally the services described in the IEP begin as soon as possible after the IEP meeting.

If it is not possible to reach consensus in an IEP meeting, the team may seek assistance to resolve disagreements. Parents and educators have the right to seek agreement through informal means, the preappeal process or mediation. Preappeal, mediation or informal procedures may not deny or delay a parent's right to a due process hearing.



# Developing IEPs

At the IEP meeting the team makes its plans while considering:

- the student and family's vision for the student's future,
- the need to provide an education which meets a student's unique needs,
- the need to educate children with disabilities with peers without disabilities to the maximum extent appropriate, and
- the services, activities and supports that assure smooth transitions throughout a student's education and to life after high school.

## Student and Family Vision

The vision describes the student's and family's hopes for the future. It is written in the words of the family and student. By age 14, the student's vision includes postschool activities based on his or her needs, preferences, and interests. *Our Ideas for the IEP* in the Parent Resources section may help the student and parents prepare for this discussion.

## Examples of Vision Statements

**Student and Family Vision.** John's family wants to see him get his temper under control so that he can participate in more general education classes next year. They would also like to see him develop neighborhood friendships.

**Student and Family Vision.** Jenna's family would like to see her become toilet-trained through the collaboration of home and school.

**Student and Family Vision.** Chen and her family would like to see her improve in reading.

**Student and Family Vision.** Roberto hopes to work in a retail or office setting after high school, as a cashier or data entry person. He plans to live with his family after graduation, but eventually wants to live in his own apartment, perhaps with a roommate. At this time he does not have any interest in pursuing postsecondary education.

**Student and Family Vision.** Ray wants to work as a custodian. His parents would like him to manage apartment buildings. Ray will continue to live with his family.

**Student and Family Vision.** Maria wants to be a child care provider in a preschool or day care center. She will earn a degree in Child Development from the Community College. She will live in an apartment.

**Student and Family Vision.** Terry would like to become a research chemist.

## Free and Appropriate Public Education

School districts and area education agencies are responsible for providing a free, appropriate public education (FAPE) for each student with a disability from birth through 21. **Free** means that special education services are provided at no cost to the parents. Parents may be charged the same incidental fees that other parents pay. **Appropriate** means that each student's program must provide the right kind of services and enough services for the student to make progress. **Public education** means that special education services are provided by the school or area education agency. The school or area education agency may provide the services directly or make arrangements for another person or agency to provide the services.

## Least Restrictive Environment

*Schools must* educate children with disabilities with nondisabled children to the maximum extent appropriate. *School must not* use separate classes or separate schools if a child with a disability can be educated in the regular education environment. IEP teams begin the least restrictive environment (LRE) discussion with the idea that the general education environment is appropriate for educating all students. The IEP team considers all possible settings. The key factors in making LRE decisions are:

- the specific needs of the individual,
- help needed by the student or educators in the general education setting, and
- the appropriateness and potential benefit of each service and setting.

## Transitions

As students progress through school they change grades, teachers, buildings, and levels of education. Schools may change how they teach and what they teach. IEP teams need to be sensitive to each of these changes and develop IEPs that prepare the student for change. IEP teams also need to prepare the student's next teachers and next service providers to carry out the IEP.

Schools and AEAs are required to support movement from school to postschool activities. It is important for families, schools and other agencies to work together during this process. The process begins by age 14. The student's needs, preferences and interests guide the transition from school to postschool activities. To prepare a student for postschool activities, the IEP team considers:

- a course of study (projected classes and activities that link to the vision);
- instruction;
- related services such as counseling, physical therapy, or transportation;
- community experiences;
- the development of employment and other postschool adult living objectives; and
- acquisition of daily living skills and functional vocational evaluation.

**Important note.** Parent rights in special education transfer to the student when the student reaches age 18. The student must be informed of the rights that will transfer to him or her and it is important that the student understand those rights.

# Additional Considerations

The needs of some students may require special consideration of:

- behavior concerns
- limited English proficiency
- blindness or visual impairment
- deafness or hearing impairment
- assistive technology
- a health plan
- discipline procedures

## Behavior Concerns

The IEP team considers the behavior of the student. If the student's behavior interferes with his or her learning or the learning of others, the IEP team designs appropriate interventions. Also, the IEP team designates needed supports for the student and for school personnel.

## Limited English Proficiency

It usually takes several years for a student to be able to carry on a conversation in a second language. Learning a second language well enough for school success takes longer—as many as five to seven years. A student cannot be considered disabled because of limited English proficiency.

The student with a disability *and* limited English proficiency requires special education services to address needs related to his or her disability. The student with a disability *and* limited English proficiency may also require general educational help to assist in learning English. The IEP team decides if services will be provided in a language other than English.

## Blindness or Visual Impairment

Decisions about a student's reading medium (Braille, magnified print, etc.) are integrated into the IEP for students who are blind or visually impaired. The IEP team also assures that personnel licensed to teach individuals with visual impairments provide needed instruction in Braille reading and writing.

## Deafness or Hearing Impairment

The IEP team considers the communication needs of students who are deaf or hard of hearing. The IEP team discusses the student's opportunity to communicate with others and to be taught in his or her own language and communication mode (e.g., sign language). If needed, the IEP includes a special communication plan.

## Assistive Technology

Assistive technology helps a student benefit from the general education curriculum and participate successfully in home, school and work activities. Adapted handles for forks or spoons, or pencil grips are low tech examples of assistive technology. Computers, computer software, auditory trainers and classroom amplification systems are high tech examples of assistive technology devices. An assistive technology service assists the student and family to find, choose, and use assistive technology devices.

## Health Plan

An individual health plan describes confidential, preplanned, ongoing special health services. An individualized health plan is a part of the IEP when a special health service is necessary to:

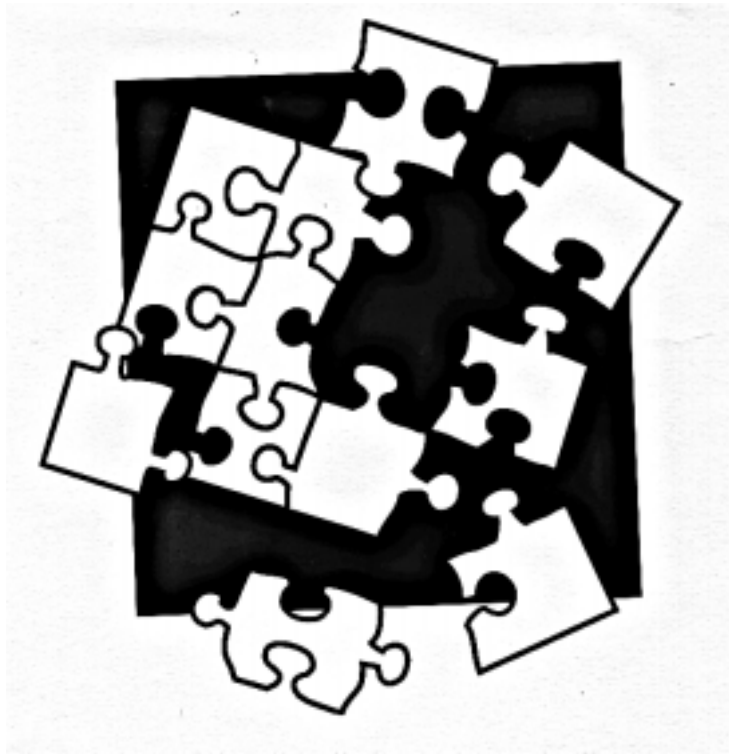
- assist the student to benefit from special education,
- allow a student to be in school and to participate in school activities, or
- assist the student to become more independent in taking care of personal health needs.

## Discipline Procedures

The IEP team has special responsibilities when a student with a disability faces disciplinary action. The IEP team may need to assess the student's behavior, the reasons for the behavior, and the purpose of the behavior. With this information, the team designs a behavioral intervention plan and determines the appropriate educational setting for the student. In some disciplinary situations, the IEP team will need to determine if a student's behavior is related to his or her disability.

*Parental Rights in Special Education* contains detailed information about discipline procedures.

# Putting the Pieces Together



## Present Levels of Educational Performance

The Present Levels of Educational Performance (PLEP) describes the student's current achievement in areas of need. The PLEP includes the student's strengths and teaching methods and interventions which have been successful for the student. The PLEP describes the needs of the student and states how the student's disability affects his or her involvement and progress in the general curriculum. For preschool children, the PLEP describes how the disability affects the child's participation in age appropriate activities and in natural environments. The PLEP is used to determine appropriate goals and services for a student.

## Measurable Annual Goals and Progress Indicators

**Goals.** A goal states what the IEP team wants a student to accomplish within a 12 month period with the assistance of special education services. Goals are priorities for student growth. Whenever possible and appropriate, goals relate to progress in the general curriculum — the learning outcomes schools have for all kids. Goals assist in determining the services, specific courses, and experiences a student will need to reach his or her vision. Goals should be meaningful, measurable and useful in making decisions about the student's education.

**Progress indicators.** The IEP includes progress indicators that help determine whether the student will accomplish the goal. Progress indicators may be called benchmarks, milestones or short-term objectives.

### Example

**Goal:** include **conditions** (when and how the student will perform); **behavior** (what the student will do); and **criterion** (acceptable level of performance)

In 36 weeks, given a 5th grade reading passage, Adam will orally read 99 words per minute.

**Evaluation procedures** (how progress will be measured):

Adam's resource teacher will have him read orally from 5th grade reading passages at least once a week. Results will be charted weekly.

**Major Milestones:**

By January 18, 81 words per minute

By March 25, 87 words per minute

By June 1, 93 words per minute

By November 23, 99 words per minute

## Assistance to Students and Supports for School Personnel

In the Present Levels of Educational Performance (PLEP), the IEP team describes the student's needs related to his or her disability. In choosing goals, the IEP team identifies those needs that require special education services and monitoring and reporting to parents. Now the team determines the services and activities that will help the student:

- meet the annual goals,
- participate successfully in the general curriculum, and
- receive his or her education with nondisabled peers to the maximum extent appropriate.

**Special education services — instructional, support and related services.** To accomplish the IEP goals, a student may be taught by a special education teacher, a speech and language pathologist, an occupational therapist, or other special education professionals. A student might also be taught by a general education teacher working with a special educator or by a paraprofessional (teacher's aide or instructional assistant) working under the direction of a special educator. A student may receive related services, such as counseling or nursing services or special transportation services.

Transportation is a related service. A student's transportation arrangements may not shorten a student's school day. Suspension from the bus because of a discipline problem may not keep a child from school.



**Accommodations and modifications.** Sometimes a student needs changes to his or her educational program. Modifications and accommodations may allow a student to learn and perform successfully with nondisabled peers. A student with a reading disability may need to have some classroom materials read to him to be successful in science and social studies. A student with a physical disability may need to give her answers orally instead of in writing. A calculator may help a student with a math disability.

**Supplementary aids and services.** Supplementary aids and services are provided to allow a student to participate with nondisabled peers. Supplementary aids and services may include educational interpreters for deaf or hard of hearing students or students with limited English proficiency. Supplementary aids and services may also include readers for individuals with visual impairments, special education assistants, special materials, and specialized equipment for use in the school.

**Supports for school personnel.** The special educators, general education teachers and other staff involved with students with disabilities may require assistance to meet the unique needs of these students. Consultation with other professionals, special training, instructional materials, or direct assistance may be necessary supports for educators.

**Service settings.** The IEP team follows the principle that students with disabilities are to be educated with their nondisabled peers to the maximum extent appropriate. Services, aids, accommodations, and supports are considered in relationship to student success *and* education with nondisabled peers.

The goals for a student may have implications for the location of services. For example, goals for community involvement (learning to make bus transfers, shop for groceries, pay utility bills at City Hall) require education in the community. The services provided to a student also have implications for the setting. Counseling services or nursing services may require privacy.

## Participation in Districtwide Assessment

Most Iowa school districts give academic achievement assessments such as the Iowa Tests of Basic Skills (ITBS). The IEP team makes a decision about a student's participation in this kind of districtwide assessment. Three decisions are possible:

- The student will participate in the districtwide assessment in the same way as students without disabilities.
- The student will participate in the districtwide assessment in a different way from students who do not have disabilities. Extra testing time, having portions of the test read out loud, or having another person record the answers are examples of taking a test in a different way.
- In rare instances, the student will not participate in a particular districtwide assessment. The IEP team must explain why the assessment is inappropriate for the student. The team also states how the student will be assessed.

## Extended School Year Services

Extended School Year Services (ESYS) are special education and related services that a child with a disability receives outside the scheduled school year. ESYS is provided when the IEP team identifies and documents the need for ESYS services. The IEP team considers two issues when determining a student's need for ESYS:

1. **Regression.** All students lose some skills over school breaks, such as summer vacation. This is called regression. Every school year begins with activities that review what students were taught the year before. Most students regain lost skills quickly.

ESYS may be provided when a student can be expected to lose skills and not regain those skills in a reasonable period of time. Iowa's guideline for reasonable recovery is within the first nine weeks of a new school year.

2. **Rare and unusual circumstances.** ESYS may be provided when rare or unusual circumstances make an interruption in services unreasonable. For example, one Iowa school child had a blood disorder that caused permanent hearing loss over a period of a few months. Services continued into the summer because it was extremely important to take advantage of the child's remaining hearing ability.

The IEP team must consider ESYS for each student who receives special education services. The team must consider the need for ESYS at an IEP meeting at least 60 days before any breaks of three weeks or more.

Services may be accessed or provided by the school district or the AEA. The school district or AEA provides ESYS at no cost to the parent.

## Exit from Special Education Services

IEP teams consider whether or not a student continues to need special education services. A student might not require continued services in math, but he may still need assistance in reading. Another student may be successful enough that she does not need any more special education services. Still another student might not need special education but will need general education support and assistance. The IEP team uses information from educators, parents, and the student to make these difficult and important decisions. The team might ask for additional information to make the best possible decisions. The IEP team might begin a trial period without special education assistance to see if a student will be successful.

# Parent Resources

**The Parent-Educator Connection** is a service of your area education agency for the parents of students receiving special education assistance. For more information, contact your Parent-Educator Connection.

## Our Ideas for the IEP

Our vision for our child's future	
Our child's strengths (things he or she can do easily)	Things our child particularly enjoys doing in school and out of school
Our child's challenges (things he or she finds hard)	Things we worry about
Things that educators need to know about our child	Things our child worries about
The goals we would like to see our child meet in the next year	Changes coming up we want the team to talk about
The goals we would like to see our child meet in the next few years	Ways we know our child is happy
The goals we would like to see our child meet before graduation	Ways we know our child is unhappy

# Glossary: terms which might be used in IEP meetings or documents

Term or acronym	Definition
<b>AEA</b> .....	Area education agency. Iowa has 15 area education agencies which provide many services to schools. School psychologists, school social workers, speech-language pathologists and consultants are some of the special education professionals employed by AEAs.
<b>Consulting teacher</b> .....	A special education model in which the special education teacher provides consultation to the general education teacher in order to meet the needs of a student with a disability in general education.
<b>CSD</b> .....	Community school district
<b>Curriculum and instruction</b> .....	<p>The curriculum is <i>what</i> schools teach. The set of skills, information and knowledge that we want <i>all</i> children to learn is called the <i>general education curriculum</i>. A child with a disability is taught the general education curriculum unless his or her individual needs call for different skills, information or knowledge (e.g., braille reading or self-care skills).</p> <p>Instruction is <i>how</i> schools teach. The strategies and methods used by teachers make up instruction. <i>Special education</i> is specially designed instruction to meet the needs of students with disabilities.</p>
<b>ESL</b> .....	English as a second language
<b>ESYS</b> .....	Extended school year services
<b>FAPE</b> .....	Free and appropriate public education
<b>IDEA</b> .....	Individuals with Disabilities Education Act. Federal legislation that sets the requirements that states, schools and area education agencies must follow.
<b>IEP</b> .....	Individualized Education Program

<b>LEA</b> .....	Local education agency (school district)
<b>LEP</b> .....	Limited English proficiency
<b>Levels of Service</b> .....	Schools receive money from the state to help pay the costs of special education. Schools receive more money for a student with a higher level of service than a student with a lower level of service. Iowa has three levels, referred to as Level 1, Level 2, or Level 3.
<b>LRE</b> .....	Least restrictive environment
<b>OT</b> .....	Occupational therapist
<b>PT</b> .....	Physical therapist
<b>Prior notice by a public agency</b> ..	Before a school or AEA changes a child's special education program, it must tell the parents in writing. The written notice must describe the change, give the reasons for the change, and tell what information was used to make decisions. The notice must also describe alternatives that were considered and the reasons the alternatives were rejected. Notice must also be given if the school or AEA refuses to make a change requested by the parents.
<b>RTP</b> .....	Resource teaching program. A special education model through which a student receives special education services for less than half of the school day.
<b>SCI</b> .....	Special class with integration. A special education model through which a student receives special education services for more than half of the school day.
<b>Self contained</b> .....	A special education model through which a student receives special education services for the entire school day and is not educated with nondisabled peers.
<b>SLP</b> .....	Speech-language pathologist

- Team teaching** ..... A special education teacher and general education teacher work together with a class of students, some who have disabilities and some who do not have disabilities.
- Transition** ..... In the IEP process this usually refers to the transition to post-high school activities. Transition planning begins no later than age 14.
- Weighting** ..... Each program model or level of service has a weighting. The higher the weighting, the more state money the school receives to help pay for special education services. The current weightings in Iowa are: 1.68, 2.35, and 3.74.





# IEP Development Summary

**Vision.** The vision is a statement of your hope, and your child's hope for the future. It may be a statement of the progress wanted for your child, the name of an occupation, or the vision may describe a level of independence for your child.

**Present Levels of Educational Performance (PLEP).** The educational needs of your child are described in the Present Levels of Educational Performance (PLEP). The PLEP uses information from parents, the student, and educators to describe the effect of your child's disability in both academic and nonacademic areas. The PLEP also describes your concerns and your child's strengths that would be useful in developing the IEP for the coming year.

**Annual goals.** The annual goals in the IEP are statements describing what your child can reasonably be expected to accomplish within a twelve month period with the assistance of special education services.

**Progress indicators.** Objectives, benchmarks, or milestones are steps between your child's present levels of educational performance and the annual goals. Progress indicators help determine whether your child is making progress with the help of special education, and whether the services being provided are meeting your child's special needs.

**Services, supports & service locations.** After goals and progress indicators have been developed, the IEP team identifies the services your child needs, supports that school personnel need in order to assist your child, and the locations where services will be provided. The following questions provide an outline for discussion.

What does your child need to be successful and to be educated to the maximum extent appropriate with nondisabled peers? Do school personnel need support and assistance to educate your child?

Will your child participate in districtwide assessments such as the Iowa Tests of Basic Skills?

Are behavioral interventions or special discipline procedures needed?

Does your child have special health needs?

Are there communication needs the IEP should address?

Are assistive technology devices or services needed?

Is special education instruction needed to achieve the goals of the IEP?

Are support or related services necessary to achieve the goals of the IEP? Services may include:

Consultant services	Audiology	Occupational therapy	Recreation services
Work experience	Physical therapy	Orientation & mobility	Parent counseling
School psychology	Nursing/health	Medical diagnostic services	Parent training
Speech-language	School social work	Counseling	

Are Extended School Year Services needed? Extended School Year Services (ESYS) means IEP services provided during the summer:

- when a student can be expected to lose acquired skills and not recover those skills in a reasonable period of time (recovery within the first nine weeks of a new school year is Iowa's *guideline* for reasonable), or
- when rare or unusual circumstances make an interruption in services unreasonable.

If your child is 14 or older: What course of study (projected classes and activities that link to the vision) will help prepare your child for a successful transition to adult life?

If your child is 16 or older:

- Are the development of employment or other post-high school living objectives necessary?
- Is the acquisition of daily living skills needed?
- Are community experiences, special instruction or related services necessary to achieve the goals of the IEP and help prepare your child for a successful transition to adult life?
- Is an evaluation to assist in vocational planning needed?

Where will special education services be provided? The preferred location for special education services is the school your child would normally attend. Also, your child should not be taken from the regular classroom for services without a good reason. If services are provided outside the regular classroom, the IEP must state the reasons. The IEP team may consider services in: general education environments, including the community; special education environments, such as special education classrooms; or even a special school, if needed.

**Program support.** Area education agency (AEA) staff assist special education teachers by supporting their programs. This may include the need for a service or activity for your child that is not anticipated when the IEP is written. You will be informed and involved if there is a need for AEA staff to work with your child. If the activity or staff involvement will be needed for more than a very short period of time, the IEP will be revised.

# Parental Rights Summary

This is a *very brief summary* of your rights. In order to assure that you have a full explanation of your rights you are to receive a copy of *Parental Rights in Special Education*. In addition to your rights, *Parental Rights in Special Education* lists sources of assistance for parents and outlines the procedures followed for changing a child's program or placement for disciplinary reasons.

A child who is disabled and requires special education has: (1) the right to a free, and appropriate public education, and (2) the right to an education provided in the least restrictive environment.

Free and appropriate public education (FAPE). *Free* means that special education services are provided at no cost to the parents. You may be charged the same incidental fees that are charged to other parents, such as fees for extracurricular activities or lab fees for general education classes. *Appropriate* means that your child's program must provide the right kind of services and enough services for your child to receive educational benefit. *Educational benefit* is progress towards the goals set for your child. Your child's goals may be the same goals we hold for all children, goals individually selected for your child, or some combination of these two kinds of goals.

Least restrictive environment (LRE). Your child will attend classes, participate in extracurricular activities and receive services with children who are not disabled to the maximum extent appropriate.

Parental rights. Your school and area education agency (AEA) follow legal requirements which are designed to ensure FAPE and LRE for your child. FAPE and LRE for your child are protected by the rights you have as parents. Procedural (due process) rights assure that you are involved in planning and decision making for your child. These rights include:

Participation rights: (1) your right to provide information for your child's evaluation, (2) your right to be a member of any group that makes decisions regarding the educational placement of your child, and (3) your right to participate in meetings related to your child's identification, evaluation, and educational placement.

Notice rights: (1) your right to be informed of meetings related to your child's identification, evaluation, and educational placement, (2) your right to be informed of any changes in your child's program, (3) your right to be informed of any refusal to make changes in your child's program, and (4) your right to receive notice in a manner you can understand.

Consent rights: (1) your right to give consent to a preplacement evaluation, (2) your right to give consent to reevaluations of your child, and (3) your right to give consent to initial placement in special education. Your consent to an evaluation may be withdrawn before the evaluation is completed.

Records rights: (1) your right to review educational records, (2) your right to ask that records be changed if you believe they are incorrect or misleading, and (3) your right to give consent before records are disclosed to other agencies or persons.

Independent educational evaluation right: your right to request an independent evaluation at public expense if you disagree with the evaluation done by the school and AEA.

Dispute resolution rights: your right to request a preappeal conference, mediation, or a due process hearing if a disagreement about your child's program cannot be resolved in other ways. Your child's placement will not be changed without your agreement until the dispute is resolved.

Complaint right: your right to file a complaint if you believe that a special education law or regulation has been violated.

Reimbursement rights: the rights that parents have to be reimbursed for certain expenses, such as attorney's fees or private school expenses. The particular circumstances under which parents have a right to reimbursement are *very narrowly and specifically* defined. Review the full text of your rights carefully.

Surrogate parent right: the right of a child to be represented by a parent. If the child's parents are unknown or unavailable, or parental rights have been terminated a surrogate parent is appointed by your area education agency, unless a foster parent is available.

**Important note.** Parent rights transfer to the student with a disability at age 18, unless you or someone else becomes the child's legal guardian.

# Postsecondary Planning Checklist

Adapted from the National Transition Network (1996)

You and your son or daughter may wish to consider these transition activities when preparing transition plans with the IEP team. The student's skills and interests will determine which items on the checklist are relevant. Use this checklist to ask yourself whether or not these transition issues should be addressed at IEP meetings. The checklist can also help identify who should be part of the IEP team. Responsibility for carrying out activities should be determined at the IEP meetings.

## Four to five years before leaving school

- ☐ Identify personal learning styles and the necessary accommodations to be successful learner and worker
- ☐ Identify career interests and skills, complete interest and career inventories, identify education or training requirement
- ☐ Explore options for postsecondary education; explore admission criteria
- ☐ Identify interests and options for future living arrangements, including supports
- ☐ Learn to communicate effectively your interests, preferences and needs
- ☐ Be able to explain your disability and the accommodations you need
- ☐ Learn and practice informed decision making skills
- ☐ Investigate assistive technology tools that can increase community involvement and employment opportunities
- ☐ Broaden your experience with community activities and expand your friendships
- ☐ Pursue and use local transportation options *outside of family*
- ☐ Investigate money management and identify necessary skills
- ☐ Acquire identification card and the ability to communicate personal information
- ☐ Identify and begin learning skills necessary for independent living
- ☐ Learn and practice personal health care

## Two to three years before leaving school

- ☐ Identify community support services and programs (Vocational Rehabilitation, Centers for Independent Living, etc.)
- ☐ Invite adult service providers, peers, and others to the IEP meeting
- ☐ Match career interests and skills with vocational course work and community work experiences
- ☐ Gather more information on postsecondary programs and support services offered
- ☐ Make arrangements for accommodations to take college entrance exams
- ☐ Identify health care providers and become informed about sexuality and family planning issues
- ☐ Determine the need for financial support (Supplemental Security Income, state programs, Medicare)
- ☐ Learn and practice appropriate interpersonal, communication and social skills for different settings (work, school, etc.)
- ☐ Explore legal status with regards to decision making prior to age of majority (18 in Iowa)
- ☐ Begin a resume and update it as needed
- ☐ Practice independent living skills (e.g., budgeting, shopping, cooking, and housekeeping)
- ☐ Identify needed personal assistants services, and if appropriate, learn to direct and manage these services

### **One year before leaving school**

- ☐ Apply for financial support programs (Supplemental Security Income, Vocational Rehabilitation, etc.)
- ☐ Identify the postsecondary school you want to attend and arrange for accommodations
- ☐ Practice effective communication by developing interview skills, asking for help, etc.
- ☐ Identify necessary accommodations at postsecondary education and work environments
- ☐ Specify desired job and obtain paid employment with supports as needed
- ☐ Take responsibility for arriving on time to work, appointments, and social activities
- ☐ Assume responsibility for health care needs (making appointments, filling and taking prescriptions, etc.)
- ☐ Register to vote and register for selective service.

